



PRTC submits FY18 budget proposal

The PRTC Board of Commissioners voted February 9 to submit the agency’s proposed FY18 budget to its six member jurisdictions for their consideration. The member jurisdictions are Prince William, Stafford and Spotsylvania Counties and the Cities of Manassas, Manassas Park and Fredericksburg.

In addition to its bus and ridesharing services, PRTC operates the Virginia Railway Express (VRE) in partnership with the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission (NVTC), serving all six member jurisdictions.

The proposed \$60 million budget in-

cludes \$24 million in capital expenses and \$36 million in operating costs and was developed using management’s recommended guidelines that were adopted by the Board in October 2016.

The budget includes a 5 percent fare increase, minor bus service efficiencies, and internal measures to reduce expenses in FY18, which starts on July 1, 2017. This spring, PRTC will host public hearings on the budget and fare increase, and the Commission is expected to vote on the budget in June.

Each PRTC member jurisdiction

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New PRTC Executive Board appointed for 2017

At its February 9 meeting, the PRTC Board of Commissioners appointed a new slate of officers for 2017.

For the second consecutive year, PRTC’s chairman is Frank J. Principi, a member of the Prince William Board of County Supervisors representing the Woodbridge District.



Principi

“The Commission will be challenged in 2017 with the on-going fiscal con-

straints related to decreasing motor fuels tax revenues and development of a new strategic plan designed to transform the Commission into a mobility provider that better meets the needs of our residents and businesses,” Principi said.

“The strategic plan may result in the introduction of new services over the next several years including bike share/car share programs, Uber & Lyft agreements for first/last mile trips, employer shuttles, fast ferry service, and on-demand

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PRTC Spotlight

Operations & Operations Planning

Behind the scenes, PRTC staff members are dedicated to improving the lives of area citizens by providing and promoting safe and reliable mobility services. Here's a quick look at our Operations & Operations Planning Department.

As long-time riders know, PRTC's bus schedules are updated twice annually to reflect necessary changes in routing, operating times and other factors. Determining which streets a bus will serve, where bus stops can be located, and how often trips can run are just a few of the tasks handled regularly by the Operations & Operations Planning Department.

Planning public transportation services in an area as widespread and diverse as Prince William County can be challenging. Because of lower residential densities in western Prince William, there are fewer public transportation options there than on the more-populous eastern end. But the most important factor that determines the level of bus service in our region is funding.

In general, passenger fares pay only a fraction of what it costs to operate public transportation, so PRTC, like all transit agencies across the nation, relies on federal, state and/or local funding. For the past decade, that local funding has been generated solely by a regional 2.1 percent

motor fuels tax. But as cars become more fuel-efficient and gas prices remain relatively low, the amount of money generated by that tax has declined significantly. That has resulted in PRTC frequently cutting the amount of bus service it offers while raising fares in recent years.

In addition to analyzing what services can be trimmed when necessary, the Planning and Operations Department also:

- Stays aware of situations that could cause changes to regular operations, such as weather events and street closures;
- Tracks and studies ridership figures, on-time performance and other data;
- Monitors complaints and passenger survey results to catch trends early and make changes when possible;
- Meets every three weeks with First Transit management and quarterly with bus operators to discuss operational issues and challenges;
- Cooperates with organizations, officials, and neighboring transit agencies to resolve transportation issues;
- Orders new buses and arranges for older buses to be



overhauled to keep them in top condition and be good stewards of taxpayer money; and

- Implements new technology to enhance bus operations, such as GPS tracking and real-time passenger information.

Another responsibility of the department is to prepare for continuity of service during emergency situations. PRTC has a plan in place that spells out exactly how operations would continue in a variety of emergency conditions. The department also works with federal, state and local officials in training first-responders for a bus-related incident, and coordinates training for PRTC staff members on threat detection and response.

With all these responsibilities and more, PRTC's Operations & Operations Planning staff is constantly striving to offer the most convenient public transportation possible while staying within our budget and to keep the public safe at all times.

Outstanding Employees

First Transit, PRTC's contract service provider, recognizes one outstanding operator each month and one outstanding technician each quarter. Additionally, an Operator of the Year is named annually. If you have a compliment about First Transit personnel, please tell us!

Operator of the Month

Timothy Wirick - December 2016

After more than 16 years of operating buses at PRTC, Timothy Wirick says his co-workers and customers are what he likes best about his job. Originally from Pennsylvania, Mr. Wirick is married and has two daughters. He has been in this area for 40 years and lives in Fauquier County.



When asked if he has hobbies, he said that as a homeowner, he spends so much time taking care of his home and yard that there's no time left for anything else. Mr. Wirick currently is a standby operator ready to provide assistance on any eastern OmniLink or Metro Direct route.

Sandra Anderson - January 2017

Sandra Anderson currently operates trips on the Route 1 OmniLink and says she enjoys being an OmniLink operator because she loves interacting with older passengers and encouraging younger passengers to be all they can be. The Prince William County resident started operating buses for PRTC in 2003 and now, after nearly 14 years of getting passengers safely where they need to go, she plans to retire in 2017. Ms. Anderson says she is looking forward to spending more time reading and with her daughter and grandson. She requested that her photo not be included.

Executive Board

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bus routes. Autonomous buses have also been discussed," he added.

"The Commission will work to stabilize PRTC's finances by increasing ridership, offering alternative transit services, and securing additional grant revenues to better serve a growing region," Principi said.

Joining Principi on the 2017 Board are:

- Vice Chairman Jeanette Rishell, Mayor of Manassas Park;
- Secretary Pamela Sebesky, member of the Manassas City Council;
- Treasurer Paul Milde III, Chairman of the Stafford County Board of Supervisors representing the Aquia District;
- Immediate Past Chairman John D. Jenkins, member of the Prince William Board of County Supervisors representing the Neabsco District; and
- At-Large Member Matthew J. Kelly, member of the Fredericksburg City Council.

Upcoming Events

A Big Thank You!

March 17, 2017 is Transit Driver Appreciation Day. Thank your bus operator or print a card at TransitDriverDay.org and make your operator's day even more special!



PRTC Board Meeting

April 6, 2017 at 7 p.m.
PRTC Transit Center
14700 Potomac Mills Road
Woodbridge





Potomac and Rappahannock
Transportation Commission

PRTC
14700 Potomac Mills Road
Woodbridge, VA 22192
703-730-6664
PRTCtransit.org

Proposed budget

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collects a 2.1 percent tax on motor fuels to pay for its share of public transportation costs. Unlike last year, Prince William County will not have a shortfall in its motor fuels tax revenues in FY18; however, the City of Manassas is facing a projected \$250,000 deficit. The tax began generating dramatically less revenue when fuel prices plummeted in late 2014. Manassas uses its fuel tax revenues to pay for its share of PRTC and VRE services as well as debt service for its downtown parking garage and parking lease costs.

“Our budget guidelines recommended making no further service cuts in the coming year in order to provide a year of stability to customers; allow elected officials to methodically determine PRTC’s future via development of a strategic plan; and to provide an opportunity to continue pursuing fund-

ing relief, such as a motor fuels tax floor,” said PRTC Interim Executive Director Eric Marx.

“If the deficit issue can’t be solved, PRTC would need to further reduce OmniLink service in the Manassas area,” Marx said.

Manassas, Manassas Park and Prince William County all contribute toward the three OmniLink routes that could be affected. PRTC will hold public hearings if cuts of 25 percent or more are proposed for Manassas area local service.

PRTC has faced budget challenges in recent years due to declining motor fuels tax revenues and reduced federal funding. Going into last year’s budget season, PRTC faced an average annual funding deficit of \$11.5 million. Through a combination of service cuts, fare increases, administrative reductions, and updated budget condi-

tions, PRTC reduced the projected deficit by \$4 million per year. To balance the FY17 budget, Prince William and Manassas used some of their Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTA) funding to cover VRE expenses. Prince William chose to dedicate NVTA funds to VRE for its five-year budget period, while Manassas did so only for FY17.

Since 2009, PRTC has cut overall service by more than 20 percent and raised fares by more than 35 percent. In FY17, PRTC is carrying an average of 7,600 daily OmniRide passengers and another 2,750 passengers per day on OmniLink local buses. As with other DC-area transit providers, PRTC ridership has fallen in recent years due to fare increases, lower fuel prices, changing economic conditions and demographics, less frequent service, and an influx of new ridesharing options such as Uber and Lyft.